

Supes say, 'Hold on, Diablo'

Colin Rigley, San Luis Obispo New Times, 3-11-10

A typical SLO County Board of Supervisors meeting can feel like a rehearsed stage show, in which there isn't so much digging for answers as there is rehashing what's already been talked about outside the public venue. But on March 9, when the topic turned to the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, question dodging and iffy responses didn't cut it.

"I do realize that our view may be inconvenient for PG&E," Supervisor Bruce Gibson said.

On a 3-2 vote, the board decided to ask the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to delay the re-licensing of Diablo Canyon until 3-D seismic studies of multiple offshore fault lines are complete. (Supervisors Frank Mecham and Katcho Achadjian voted no.) PG&E representatives expect a seismic report to be completed by December.

But PG&E reps protested that delaying the re-licensing process—the company applied in November to extend the license 20 years for each reactor—would cost ratepayers in the long run. The company applied with the Public Utilities Commission to spend \$85 million in ratepayer funds toward the studies.

PG&E Government Affairs Representative John Shoals said the company can't just put re-licensing on hold; it would have to restart the process. Additionally, Shoals and other representatives said they operate on the assumption the plant won't be re-licensed and PG&E will need at least a decade to develop an alternative power source.

The NRC has never denied a re-licensing application.

But Supervisors Adam Hill and Jim Patterson hammered company reps, repeatedly questioning the true severity of a delay and whether the company would really have to restart the re-licensing review. Hill noted that PG&E has already begun analyzing alternative power sources.

Despite PG&E's claims that the NRC might use the seismic studies, Hill emphasized that the agency won't unless asked to do so.